

For Immediate Release

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Washington, DC – Today, Rep. Albio Sires and Rep. Michael E. McMahon, members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, urged the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (“Port Authority”) to quickly resolve the Bayonne Bridge height restriction issue. This week the Port Authority released the results of a study completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which found the Bayonne Bridge’s height will pose a serious obstacle for the New York-New Jersey Port to handle the newest and largest commercial ships in the coming decades.

With the scheduled expansion of the Panama Canal set to be completed in 2014, the number of large commercial shipping vessels is set to grow significantly in the region; however, the current height of the bridge will make it impossible for these ships to access the port. The report examined several potential solutions, including a tunnel linking Bayonne and Staten Island or increasing the bridge height to 215 feet by either raising the bridge or constructing a new bridge.

“This issue needs to be addressed now,” said Rep. McMahon. “If the Bayonne Bridge is not raised, larger ships will not be able to use our port, seriously limiting economic growth in New York harbor. We need to find a solution to this problem which also focuses on increasing mass transit connections between Staten Island and Bayonne, and extends the light rail line. Our port is one of the most active in the country and is critical to the future of good quality jobs in my district. If we do not immediately start addressing the Bayonne Bridge height limitation, our local economy will undoubtedly suffer.”

The Army Corps' report also recommended further planning and environmental analyses to determine a preferred project alternative. The Port Authority authorized \$10 million last month to begin this phase of the project. The study should be completed in 2010.

"More than 269,990 jobs are generated by activity in the Port of New York and New Jersey," said Rep. Sires. "We must act now to secure these jobs and maintain the port's status as one of the largest and most productive port complexes in the nation. This report combined with the Port Authority's recent announcement to advance an alternatives study is critical to moving the project forward and keeping the port competitive. As a member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I will continue to advocate for a solution to the Bayonne Bridge height restriction."

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